

From empire to enclave

Cambodia's cinders still aflame

In two swift decades, Cambodia has descended from the peace of agricultural life into the horrors of war and famine. It has seen the disintegration of its economic and social structure and the death of an estimated six million of its people.

The current tragedy of Cambodia marks another chapter in the decline of the Khmer people, whose vast empire 800 years ago included much of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and the Malay Peninsula.

The Khmer empire reached its peak during the 12th century, when its king built the magnificent Angkor Wat monument in what is now northern Cambodia. Since then, the country of almost 66,600 square miles has been fought over, annexed or divided by the Thais, Vietnamese, French, Japanese and Americans.

France exercised its influence for more than eight decades after establishing a protectorate over Cambodia in 1863. Japanese authorities and Cambodian guerril-

las began contesting the French role during the mid-1940's, but the Paris government maintained its presence in Indochina until the early 1950's.

AS THE COLONIAL structure dissolved, Norodom Sihanouk became commander of Cambodia's army in 1953 and soon began receiving U.S. military aid. In 1955, the United Nations accepted independent Cambodia as a member.

Sihanouk, an authoritative lead-

The Cambodian Exodus

A photographic report of the Cambodian refugees, by News staff photographer David Kryszak, begins today on Page 3A.

er who ascended to the family throne, managed to remain relatively popular during the tranquil years of rice-growing and political stability.

The nation remained neutral during the early Vietnam war years, but then became a U.S. bombing target because North Vietnamese troops were hiding

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NEWS PHOTO / DAVE KRYSZAK

Suffering Cambodian infant mirrors the tragedy of the nation.

Cambodia's cinders still burn

Continued from Page 1A

there and using it as a route to South Vietnam.

Sihanouk couldn't keep out the Vietcong troops — a situation which unsettled U.S. policymakers. He shunned Washington's offers of support, saying the Central Intelligence Agency was plotting to oust him and in 1963 cut all military and economic ties with America.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS were severed two years later by Sihanouk, who objected to U.S.-South Vietnamese raids on Vietcong sanctuaries across Cambodia's border. In 1967, he exchanged ambassadors with North Vietnam.

In 1970, while Sihanouk was visiting Moscow, he was unseated in a bloodless coup by Gen. Lon Nol.

The new leader became a U.S. ally and received American supplies, but still couldn't cope with North Vietnamese intrusions or domestic Communist opposition.

In 1975, Lon Nol was overthrown by Pol Pot, whose Communist forces (known as the Khmer Rouge) began a reign of terror against suspected collaborators with the former government. In the next three years, an estimated 2 million of Cambodia's 8 million people died in purges and forced relocations to the countryside.

PHNOM PENH, once an elegant capital, was evacuated by the Khmer Rouge troops — who smashed symbols of 20th-century civilization as part of Pol Pot's campaign to build a new society.

A greater tragedy was unleashed as the genocidal rule brought mass murders, prison torture centers and forced labor camps.

Then last January, Cambodia was invaded by its neighbor Vietnam, which installed Heng Samrin as head of state. The new Phnom Penh regime calls itself the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

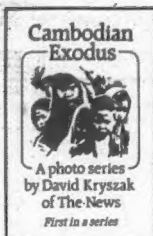
But supporters of Premier Pol Pot fled to the northwestern countryside and are conducting a guerrilla war against the new regime and the 200,000 Vietnamese troops still in Cambodia.

Little rice has been planted because of the turmoil, leading to the famine.

Beyond the vast human suffering is the specter of superpower conflict, since the Soviet Union is an ally of Vietnam while China supports the anti-Vietnamese forces of Pol Pot in Cambodia.



The children above patiently wait each day for a ration of charcoal for cooking. In the photo at right, an orphan suffering from malnutrition screams out as pain wracks his body.



Orphaned brothers, the younger one suffering from malnutrition and malaria, cling to the only thing they have — each other.

A first-hand report

There are no spoils for children of war



The innocent children suffering in the hospital tents at Sa Keaw, Thailand, are so pathetic — so terribly, terribly pathetic.

They whimper, they cry, they squirm in pain. They die alone without ever having lived, without ever having laughed or played children's games.

On assignment for The Detroit News, I went to southeast Asia to photograph the plight of the Cambodian refugees. In Sa Keaw, a refugee camp 20 miles from the Cambodian border, I found about 1,500 children, jamming five pediatric tents.

They and their parents fled Cambodia amid the war and persecution which have ravaged that country. Many are struggling to survive diseases such as malaria, hepatitis and tuberculosis. Many more are simply starving to death.



KRYSZAK

A child in the final stages of starvation looks so old, so determined to die. The head swells grotesquely and the body shrivels to a wrinkled mass of skin over tiny, brittle bones. It is a horrifying sight.

I couldn't believe this was happening to these children, who know nothing about the political upheavals which brought on this agony. Even the children who survive this ordeal will never fully recover. The starvation and disease will leave them with permanent brain damage and deformed bodies, in addition to deep emotional scars.

There are some children in Sa Keaw, however, who appear determined when compared to those in the hospital. These children have managed to find food. They have some meat on their bones. They have managed somehow to fight off disease.

But what strikes you is how some of the children are so grown up despite their young age. These youngsters know that survival is a constant struggle. They become self-reliant, standing patiently in long food lines, then looking for charcoal with which to cook. Some take care of younger children in their family — but few have any family left.

— DAVID KRYSZAK



A 4-year-old stands next to a cook pot. Plastic sheets have been used to make many of the tents the people live in.



Children carrying red plastic bowls line up eight times a day to be fed a high-protein milk substance.

Several agencies provide aid for the refugees

The following agencies are among several providing food and supplies for Cambodian refugees in Thailand. Those wanting to contribute to the Cambodian relief effort may write to one of them.

American National Red Cross
International Services
Cambodia Relief
17th and D Streets
Washington, D.C. 20006

U.S. Committee for UNICEF
Cambodian Relief
331 East 38th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016

Catholic Relief Services
For Cambodia
1611 First Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

American Friends Service Committee
For Cambodia
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

World Vision
Cambodia Relief
919 West Huntington Drive
Monrovia, Calif. 91016



This orphan is crying more from fear of being left alone than from malnutrition. He is one of 1,500 children being cared for.

Cambodian Exodus

A photo series
by David Kryszak
of The News

Second in a series

'Your eyes cannot adjust to the horrors'

It is the smell of rotting human flesh and human waste which strikes you first when you near Sa Kaew, a refugee camp in Thailand about 20 miles from the Cambodian border.

On assignment for The Detroit News, I visited the camp to report on the plight of thousands who have fled war-ravaged Cambodia.

Your nose becomes accustomed to the odor of the camp, but your eyes cannot adjust to the horrors you see after you walk past the armed Thai soldiers guarding the barbed-wire gates.

There is a seemingly infinite sea of people lying motionless; their eyes hollow, their bodies mere flesh over bones.

Some 50,000 Cambodians are crammed into the 100-acre camp. Their homes are sheets of blue plastic held up by bamboo. They sleep on reed mats, old blankets or the bare ground. But at least here they can get food, here they can get medical attention. Here they have a chance.

— DAVID KRYSZAK



KRYSZAK



The woman at left crouches in 95 degree heat. She has seen war and knows hunger well. She is 45 years old. The man (above) suffers from malnutrition. He is 35.



The woman at left was one of the last people to come to the refugee camp. A war widow, she and her children found shelter along a barbed-wire fence. The man above rests his head on an iron pipe. He is too weak to get in the food lines so a friend fills his bowl for him.



Living conditions are so crowded that tents are built along the open latrine at right. The man above is weak from starvation.



The food lines stretch a half mile. The people don't push and seldom talk.

Relief for the refugees

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American National Red Cross
International Service
Cambodia Relief
170 and D Streets
Washington, D.C. 20006

U.S. Committee for UNICEF
Cambodian Relief
331 East 38th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016

Catholic Relief Services
For Cambodia
1011 First Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

American Friends Service Committee
For Cambodia
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

World Vision
Cambodia Relief
815 West Hastings Drive
Monrovia, Calif. 91016

Cambodian Exodus

A photo series
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Third in a series

1. The woman at right has just brought her sick baby into the spartan medical facility at Sa Keaw, Thailand. They are Cambodian refugees staying in the camp. I was on assignment for The Detroit News in southeast Asia when

KRYSZAK

Dr. John Goldenring went to work to save the baby.

This is a photo-report on what happened — and what happens every day as medical personnel dedicate themselves to relieving the pain of the Cambodian refugees.



2. "Please, kid, don't die on me!" Dr. Goldenring pleaded passionately with the frail, 9-month-old baby as he searched frantically for a vein that would take an intravenous need-

le. "Come on, you can do it!" He finally found the vein and quickly sent the medicine into her body. "You've got a whole life ahead of you; don't quit now!"



3. He listened to her heart beat. Then two more shots of medicine went into the tiny body. "You're really sick, I know, but you can do it."



4. The baby never cried, never moved. Only her eyes followed Dr. Goldenring. He did not want this baby, who was suffering from malaria, anemia and malnutrition, to die.

He left private practice in San Francisco and came to Thailand to help the Cambodians. He is not paid for his efforts. Like others in camp, Dr. Goldenring works 12 to 15 hours a day.



5. Dr. Goldenring tenderly ran his hand over the baby's forehead and left her with her tearful mother.



6. An hour had passed since he started working on the baby. There was nothing more that could be medically done. "It's out of my hands now."

7. This infant was but one of 1,500 under pediatric care at the camp. Several hours later, she died.

Relief agencies aid the refugees

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American National Red Cross
International Services
Cambodia Relief
1715 and O Streets
Washington, D.C. 20036

U.S. Committee for UNICEF
Committee Office
301 East 58th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

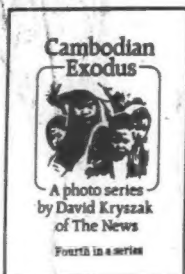
Catholic Relief Services
For Cambodia
101 First Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

American Friends Service Committee
201 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

World Vision
Cambodia Relief
19444 Washington Blvd.
Menlo Park, Calif. 94025



Women sew garments which are sold for profit in the market.



Freedom and hope — for a very lucky few



Children (above) as well as the elderly (below) are cheerful and happy. The aid from relief agencies insures they eat regularly.



Living conditions are primitive but at least this woman has food to cook.

The Hmong tribe lives by the spirit of what its tribal name means — free will.

On assignment for The Detroit News, I went to Ban Vinal, Thailand, to visit this proud, independent Laotian tribe which has struggled for years against Communism. Seeing what the tribe has accomplished gave me hope. Aid from relief organizations has given these Laotian refugees the means to rebuild their lives; I believe it could do the same for the Cambodians who have fled their homeland.

In its quest for freedom approximately 60 percent of the Hmong tribe has traveled for months this year through steamy jungles, hunted along the way by Communist forces. The final obstacle to Ban Vinal is the perilous Mekong River, where many are killed by Vietnamese border patrols or the river's swift current. Nevertheless, since 1976 some 47,000 Hmongs have made it to Ban Vinal.

In contrast to the squalor of the Cambodian refugee camp in Sa Keo, the Ban Vinal compounds are rolling and green. Food donations and medical assistance have alleviated hunger and disease. The men farm the land and build primitive but comfortable bamboo huts. The women sew and take care of happy, smiling passengers.

In Sa Keo, refugees fight a nearly hopeless struggle with life and death; in Ban Vinal, hope is abundant as the villagers live with basic necessities while seeking resettlement in another country.

Relief aid makes the difference.

— DAVID KRYSZAK



KRYSZAK



A young girl cleans rice which was grown in the garden.



Women picks lettuce in the garden.



A family draws fresh water from the community well.

Agencies which aid the refugees

The following agencies are among several providing food and supplies for refugees in Thailand. Those wanting to contribute to the relief effort may write to one of them:

American Refugee Relief Corp.
International Services
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
190 East 12 Street
Baltimore, Md. 21202
U.S. Committee for UNICEF
Cincinnati Office
222 East 12th Street
New York, N.Y. 10003
Cambodian Relief Fund
for Cambodia
1001 First Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10003

American Friends Service Committee
New York Office
1201 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

World Vision
Cambodian Relief
Department of International Development
Baltimore, Md. 21202



The resettlement compound in Bangkok is this girl's playground.

The sun rises on new life

"Do I look American enough? Do you think my sponsor will like me?"

Dang Lee spoke to me in nervous but excited broken English when he found out I was from Michigan. I was on assignment for The Detroit News to see the plight of Cambodian refugees who have fled their war-ravaged homeland.

Dang, his wife, Shous, and his two brothers, Ser and Cha, were in the Bangkok airport waiting for the plane which was to take them to their sponsor, the Zion Lutheran Church in Petoskey, Mich.



KRYSZAK

THEY WERE EAGER to begin a better life in America. But Dang, 23, the eldest in the family, was worried that they would have trouble adjusting to a different culture.

The Lee family, like many of the 300 other refugees waiting to board the plane, had waited more than a year for red tape to be cut so they could resettle in America.

The resettlement process is long and tedious. It begins with interviews in refugee camps and ends many months later with a plane ride to another country. But only a few among thousands get to make the journey because there simply are more qualified applicants than openings.

When refugees are accepted by a sponsor, they leave the camp and travel to Bangkok. If they are given a medical OK, they leave for their new country within 10 days. There is no indoctrination period for those who will be resettled.

THEY DON'T KNOW what to expect, what to wear or what to say. Consequently, as the moment of departure approaches, they are happy but scared. They also are inquisitive. When I was in the Bangkok airport, several people gathered around me, asking me to tell them all I could about America.

It was 5:30 a.m. when Dang Lee, his family and the 300 other refugees boarded the plane for their new lives. It seemed appropriate that just as the plane took off, the sun started to rise.

—DAVID KRYSZAK



This family is being interviewed at the camp in Ban Vinal to try to qualify for settlement in America. They are interviewed twice over a six-month period. If the family

members qualify, which can take as long as a year, they are taken to a resettlement camp in Bangkok.



Sleeping mats are crowded into this room at the resettlement center.

Cambodian Exodus



A photo series by David Kryszak of The News

Last in a series



Refugees cleared for travel to the U.S. sleep in the Bangkok airport. Thai officials make the groups stay closely together so they don't get lost.

The Lee family waits in line at the Bangkok airport for a flight to America. Although happy to be leaving, the fear of the trip is clearly etched on their faces.



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The following agencies are among several providing food and supplies for refugees in Thailand. Those wanting to contribute to the relief effort may write to one of them.

American Refugee Relief Fund
Box 674-A
Cincinnati, Ohio 45201

Agency for International Development
1000 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

U.S. Committee for UNHCR
Columbian Hall
200 West 10th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011

Catholic Relief Services
600 Cambridge
1001 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

Refugees International and Crisis
Relief International
Columbian Hall

World War II Veterans
1210 Franklin Street
Detroit, Mich. 48206